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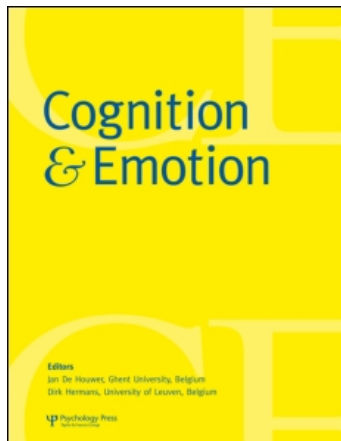
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What do we talk about when we talk about disappointment? Distinguishing outcome-related disappointment from person-related disappointment

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Empirical research on the emotion disappointment has focused uniquely on disappointments produced by outcomes that are worse than expectations. Introspection suggests that in many cases persons instead of outcomes cause the disappointment. In the present study we therefore argue that the emotion word “disappointment” refers to two different emotional experiences, namely, outcome-related disappointment and person-related disappointment. Results from an empirical study support this distinction by showing that these two types of disappointment differ from each other and from anger and sadness with respect to appraisals and response types.

Not getting an expected promotion, failing an exam, losing an important match, a friend letting you down, or a colleague spreading rumours about you behind your back, are just some of the events that can lead to the experience of disappointment. Observation and introspection indicate that disappointment is a frequently experienced emotion. Schimmack and Diener’s (1997) study on the intensity and frequency of affective experiences supports these observations. These researchers found that disappointment is the third most frequently experienced negative emotion (after anxiety and anger). The importance of the emotion of disappointment, and its impact on behaviour, is also acknowledged

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in decision research and marketing. For example, some decision making theories deal specifically with this emotion. This class of decision theories is known as Disappointment Theory (e.g., Bell, 1985; Gull, 1991; Loomes & Sugden, 1986). Recent research in marketing, focusing on consumer satisfaction, has shown that the emotion disappointment influences dissatisfaction and related behaviours such as complaining and word-of-mouth (e.g., Inman, Dyer, & Jia, 1997; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 1999). Thus, disappointment is omnipresent and clearly has some bearing on our day-to-day behaviours.

When reviewing these and other efforts to understand the psychology of disappointment, one thing stands out: There seem to be an unusual understanding and agreement on what disappointment is. For example, Bell (1985, p. 1) defines disappointment as: "a psychological reaction to an outcome that does not match up against expectations". Frijda refers to disappointment as the "nonachievement of an expected outcome" (Frijda, 1986, p. 280), and finally, Ortony, Clore, and Collins (1988, p. 110) define it as being "displeased about the disconfirmation of the prospect of a desirable event". In other words, theorists agree that disappointments stem from outcomes that are worse than expected.

Introspection, everyday life observations, and inspections of participants written accounts of disappointment experiences provide a different and less coherent view. These sources of information reveal that, besides this aforementioned type of disappointment that we will refer to as outcome-related disappointment (hereafter ORD), disappointment can also be experienced in relation to persons. Examples of such person-related disappointment experiences (hereafter PRD) are a friend letting you down or a colleague spreading rumours about you behind your back. This distinction between ORD and PRD that we argue is present in the universe of disappointment experiences, is not apparent from the literature. Hence, we raise the question of what we talk about when we talk about disappointment. This is an important question, since without exception the theoretical work on disappointment seems to be limited to ORD; PRD seems to be completely neglected. In the present paper we investigate the psychology of disappointment and we argue and show that these two types of disappointment are different emotional experiences in the sense that they can be differentiated with respect to appraisal patterns and response types.

The most important reason, in our view, to differentiate between ORD and PRD is that these emotions are different experiences and have idiosyncratic behavioural consequences. ORD, we argue, has implications in a more individual context, such as achievement motivation and decision making, whereas PRD has implications in a more social context, such as negotiation, trust, and joint production. For example, when one fails an exam, one could decide to try harder to make up for the earlier disappointment (cf. Higgins, 1989). Whereas, when a friend disappoints you, you could decide not to interact anymore with this friend. Or to put it in terms of Ortony et al. (1988) one could view ORD and

PRD as valenced reactions to different perspectives on the world. One could categorise ORD as an event-based emotion and PRD as an agent-based emotion. With ORD, the focus is primarily on events and the consequences of these events. Whereas with PRD the focus is primarily on agents and their actions.

Thus, the central proposition in this article is that the emotion word “disappointment” captures two different emotional experiences: ORD and PRD. We expect that these experiences occur in different situations, that they are phenomenologically different and that they have different behavioural consequences. In the present article we investigate this reasoning by *comparing* ORD and PRD, with respect to their associated appraisals and response types (i.e., feelings, thoughts, action tendencies, actions, and emotivational goals).

Appraisals

One of the most influential current psychological approaches to emotions is appraisal theory (see for a recent overview, Scherer, Schorr, & Johnstone, 2001). Appraisal theory more or less states that each emotion can be related to specific patterns of evaluations and interpretations of events (appraisals). Some theorists argue for a strong causal relationship between appraisals and emotions. Lazarus (1991, 1999), for example, argues that appraisals constitute the sole and complete proximal determinants of an emotional experience. Others, however, state that although appraisals may characterise emotions, they do not always cause emotions or determine which specific emotion is experienced (e.g., Parkinson, 1997; Frijda, 1993; Frijda & Zeelenberg, 2001). For our current purposes, distinguishing ORD from PRD, the mere existence of a relationship between appraisals and emotions is sufficient. We expect that ORD and PRD can be differentiated from each other and from other emotions on the basis of their appraisal patterns.

The only published study to date that deals with the appraisal pattern of disappointment is reported in Frijda, Kuipers, and Ter Schure (1989). Their results showed that with disappointment the situation is appraised as: negative, unexpected, and having certain (as opposed to uncertain) consequences. Furthermore, they showed that disappointment situations are appraised as relatively uncontrollable and caused by an agent other than the self. In Frijda et al.’s study participants were asked to imagine a disappointing situation and appraisals were assessed, however no explicit distinction was made between ORD and PRD. Because the type of disappointment was not assessed it remains unclear whether their respondents were referring to ORD or PRD. Consequently, it is difficult to establish whether the obtained appraisal pattern of disappointment is representative of ORD or PRD, or perhaps a combination of both.

In the present study we examine the relations between ORD and PRD and six appraisal dimensions proposed by Roseman, Antoniou, and Jose (1996): unexpectedness, motivational state, control potential, legitimacy, problem source,

and agency. These appraisal dimensions were derived from several different appraisal theories (e.g. Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 1984; Scherer, 1984; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Smith & Lazarus, 1993; Weiner, 1985) and found to differentiate a large number of emotions. We investigate the appraisal patterns of ORD and PRD in the context of two related negative emotions that are included on nearly every emotion theorist's list: sadness and anger. We choose to include these latter two emotions, because sadness (as ORD) can be seen as an outcome-related emotion. Whereas anger (as PRD) can be seen as a person-related emotion. First, we will briefly outline what the appraisal dimensions refer to and how we expect ORD and PRD to differ on these dimensions and how ORD and PRD relate to sadness and anger on these dimensions.

Unexpectedness refers to whether the emotion eliciting event was expected or unexpected. Several authors stressed the importance of unexpectedness in the emotion of disappointment (e.g., Frijda et al., 1989; Shand, 1914). Furthermore, Rothbaum, Weisz, and Snyder (1982) stated that disappointment is aversive partly because people are not prepared for the outcome. Others stress the relationship between prior probability and disappointment (Bell, 1985; Landman, 1993; Ortony et al., 1988; van Dijk & van der Pligt, 1997; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 1999). More probable (positive) outcomes give rise to more disappointment when these outcomes are (unexpectedly) not obtained. We argue that the relationship between unexpectedness and disappointment is strong for ORD, because with ORD people hold explicit expectations that something positive would be obtained. This reasoning would be in line with the finding that when confronted with uncertain outcomes, people try to avoid ORD by lowering their expectations (Shepperd, Ouellette & Fernandez, 1996; van Dijk, Zeelenberg, & van der Pligt, in press). Moreover, we expect that the events that cause ORD are more seen as unexpected than those that cause PRD, anger, and sadness. With PRD, people hold in our view less explicit expectations about obtaining something positive than with ORD. Furthermore, an earlier study concerning ORD and PRD (van Dijk, van der Pligt & Zeelenberg, 1998) showed that ORD scored higher on unexpectedness than PRD. Previous research concerning anger and sadness showed that these two emotions are not very strongly related to (un-) expectedness (Frijda et al., 1989; Roseman et al., 1996).

Motivational state refers to appraising an event as relevant to appetitive motives (wanting to get or keep something pleasurable) or as appraising an event as relevant to aversive motives (wanting to get rid of or avoid something painful). Van Dijk, Zeelenberg, and van der Pligt (1999) showed that disappointment (i.e., ORD) is more strongly associated with the motivation to obtain something positive than sadness, anger, frustration, and regret. Similarly, we expect to find that ORD is more strongly associated with wanting to get or keep something pleasurable than PRD, sadness, and anger.

Control potential refers to the perceived ability to control or do something about the event. Disappointment has been associated with low control potential (Frijda et al., 1989). We expect that both ORD-eliciting events and PRD-eliciting events are appraised as low in control potential, as both types of disappointment are expected to be caused by another agent other than the self. Moreover, we expect that PRD is associated with even lower levels of control potential than ORD. When a person disappoints you, probably very little can be done about the situation, because the other person is the main agent in the situation. Moreover, research on the fundamental attribution error shows that people have a tendency to attribute behaviour to inner characteristics (Jones & Harris, 1967). Thus, when another person disappoints you, you are likely to attribute it to that person's personality, which leaves little potential for control. When an outcome is disappointing, there could still be an opportunity to obtain a wanted outcome (e.g., when one is disappointed about getting a low grade on an exam, one sometimes can take a re-exam). Sadness is usually also associated with low control potential (Frijda et al., 1989; Roseman et al., 1996), whereas anger is not strongly associated with low control potential (Roseman et al.). Therefore, we expect that PRD and sadness are more associated with low control potential than ORD and anger.

Legitimacy refers to whether a person thinks of him or her self as being morally right in the event. We expect that PRD is more strongly appraised as a situation in which one is morally right than ORD is. This expectation is based on the work of Ortony et al. (1988) who argued that some emotions are evaluated in relation to goals, whereas others are evaluated according to standards. In line with this, Clore, Ortony, and Brand (cited in Clore, Schwarz, & Conway, 1994) found that some instances of disappointment (PRD we would argue) cluster together with emotions like shame and embarrassment, which are argued to be standard-based. By contrast, other instances of disappointment (ORD in our view) clustered together with emotions, such as sadness and frustration, which are argued to be goal-based. Legitimacy also plays an important role in anger. This emotion is usually associated with an appraisal of being morally right (Roseman et al., 1996). Therefore, we expect that PRD and anger will load higher on legitimacy than ORD and sadness will.

The appraisal dimension of *Problem source* refers to whether an event is attributed to characterological (e.g., thinking that the event did reveal the basic nature of someone or something) or noncharacterological factors. We expect that PRD is more strongly appraised as revealing the basic nature of someone or something than ORD. When someone disappoints you this is likely to be attributed to the character of this person (another example of the fundamental attribution error), than when one gets, for example, a low grade on an exam. Also on this dimension we expect that PRD resembles more anger, whereas ORD resembles more sadness. For example, Roseman et al. (1996) showed that

anger is more strongly appraised as revealing the basic nature of someone or something than sadness.

The last appraisal dimension we investigated in relation to the two types of disappointment is *Agency*. In the present study we examine three different types of agency appraisals, that is, self-agency (evaluating an event as caused by the self), other-person-agency (evaluating an event as caused by someone else), and circumstances-agency (evaluating an event as caused by circumstances beyond anyone's control). We argue that an appraisal of other-person agency is especially important in PRD.¹ Whereas in ORD an appraisal of circumstances-agency is important (cf. van Dijk et al., 1998; Zeelenberg, van Dijk, & Manstead, 1998a; 2000). Anger is usually associated with other-person agency (e.g., see Frijda et al., 1989; Ortony et al., 1988; Roseman et al., 1996) and is in this sense comparable with PRD; both can be seen as agent-based emotions (Ortony et al.) or other-person directed emotions (Roseman et al.). Sadness is usually associated with circumstances-agency (Roseman et al.) and in this sense comparable with ORD; both can be seen as event-based emotions (Ortony et al.) or event-directed emotions (Roseman et al.). We expect that both PRD and anger receive high scores on other-person agency, whereas both ORD and sadness receive high scores on circumstances-agency. For self-agency we expect that all four emotions receive low scores, but that the scores for anger and PRD are the lowest.

In sum, we expect that ORD and PRD differ on the above-described appraisal dimensions and that they have different relations with anger and sadness. Events that elicit ORD are expected to be more strongly appraised as unexpected, wanting to obtain something pleasurable, and caused by circumstances than are events that elicit PRD. Whereas events that elicit PRD are expected to be more strongly appraised as caused by another person, revealing the basic nature of someone, oneself being morally, and low in control potential than events that elicit ORD. Moreover, PRD is expected to resemble anger on the dimensions of legitimacy, problem source, and agency. Whereas, ORD is expected to resemble sadness on these dimensions. Unexpectedness and motivational state are expected to be especially relevant for ORD. Concerning control potential we expect that PRD resembles sadness, whereas ORD resembles anger. Apart from differences in the appraisal pattern associated with ORD and PRD we expect that these two types of disappointment also differ in their response types. That is, ORD and PRD differ in the feelings, thoughts, action tendencies, actions, and emotivational goals that accompany these experiences.

¹ When PRD refers to disappointment in oneself self-agency would be the most relevant agency appraisal. However, van Dijk et al., (1998) showed that when people are asked about PRD they almost solely refer to disappointment in another person. Therefore, we discuss the appraisal dimensions and experiential content in relation to disappointment in another person.

Response types

Several researchers have shown that emotions can be differentiated in terms of distinctive feelings, thoughts, action tendencies, actions, and emotivational goals. These five response types are assumed to be part of an emotional experience (see also Frijda, 1987; Plutchik, 1980; Roseman, 1984). For example, Roseman, Wiest, and Swartz (1994) have shown that the emotions of fear, sadness, distress, frustration, disgust, dislike, anger, regret, guilt, and shame have different response profiles.

The only published study to date that deals with the response types of disappointment is reported in Zeelenberg, van Dijk, Manstead, and van der Pligt (1998b). This research has shown that regret and disappointment can be differentiated on the basis of the five response types. The findings revealed that, relative to the experience of regret, disappointment involved higher levels of: (a) feeling powerless; (b) a tendency to do nothing; (c) a tendency to get away from the situation; (d) actually turning away from the situation; and (e) wanting to do nothing. However, this study has the same limitation as the Frijda et al. (1989) study referred to earlier. No explicit distinction was made between ORD and PRD, so it again remains unclear whether the disappointment responses are characteristic of ORD, PRD, or a mixture of the two.

In the present study, we look explicitly at the response types of both ORD and PRD. We expect that these two types of disappointment differ in the feelings, thoughts, action tendencies, actions, and emotivational goals that accompany them. Because of the presumed link between (positive) expectations and ORD, we expect that ORD will be accompanied by feelings and thoughts of dashed hopes and lost opportunities. Moreover, because of the presumed higher control potential of ORD in comparison with PRD, we expect that ORD will be accompanied more than PRD by trying harder and wanting a second chance. Concerning PRD we expect that this type of disappointment, because of its presumed link with an appraisal of problem source (revealing the basic nature of someone), will be more accompanied by feelings of distance to a person, and by thoughts of disapproval about the person. In line with this, we expect that with PRD people feel more the tendency to be not associated with a person (who disappointed them), to ignore and avoid and wanting to be far away from this person.

METHOD

Participants, procedure, and design

A total of 70 students at the Free University of Amsterdam participated (and were paid) in this study. They were asked to recall and describe a situation in which they felt either intense disappointment, sadness, or

anger.² First, participants were asked how intense their emotion was in the described situation. This question was answered at a 9-point scale with end-points labelled *not at all* (1) to *very much* (9). Next, participants were asked a series of questions designed to measure appraisals and response types. Finally, participants in the disappointment condition were asked to indicate on a dichotomous question as to whether their disappointment concerned person-related disappointment or outcome-related disappointment. This was done in order to create a four-group between-subjects design (ORD vs. PRD vs. Anger vs. Sadness).

Appraisal measures

We included six different appraisal dimensions: unexpectedness, motivational state, control potential, legitimacy, problem source, and agency (cf. Roseman et al., 1996). The first five dimensions were measured by one appraisal item, whereas the agency dimension was measured by three items (self-agency, other-person-agency, and circumstances-agency). The appraisal items were found by Roseman et al. to differentiate clearly between different emotions. Each (appraisal) item asked whether a particular appraisal had caused the participant to feel the emotion that was recalled. Each appraisal item was preceded by the stem “My [emotion term] was caused by”. This was done in order to keep participants focused on the relevant emotion. For example, an item assessing the extent to which an appraisal of unexpectedness had caused a participant to feel disappointment was: “My disappointment was caused by: *the event being expected (1) ... the event being unexpected (9)*”. For all appraisals, 9-point rating scales, anchored appropriately at each end, were used. The items and response scales measuring each appraisal are shown in Table 1.

Response type measures

We asked participants about their feelings, thoughts, action tendencies, actions, and emotivational goals that accompany the recalled emotion, using the procedure of Roseman et al. (1994). Each of these five response types was assessed by means of four items. These items took the form of statements about their experience of the emotion recalled. Two items were intended to measure responses typical of PRD (see Table 3). The other two items in each 4-item set were intended to measure responses typical of ORD (see Table 4). More specifically, participants were asked: “When you felt disappointment [anger/sadness], to what extent did you ...”, followed by the items shown in Tables 3 and

²The emotion words in the present study were in Dutch. The Dutch emotion words were *teleurstelling* (disappointment), *boosheid* (anger), and *verdriet* (sadness). We have no reason to believe that there are substantial differences between Dutch and English in the denotative or connotative meaning of these words.

TABLE 1
Appraisal dimensions and stems and scale anchors for items measuring appraisals*

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Item and scale anchors</i>
Unexpectedness	My [emotion term] was caused by ... The event being expected (1) to The event being unexpected (9).
Motivational state	Wanting to get ride of or avoid something painful (1) to Wanting to get or keep something pleasurable (9).
Control potential	Thinking that there was nothing I could do about the event (1) to Thinking that there was something I could do about the event (9).
Legitimacy	Thinking of myself as morally wrong (1) to Thinking of myself as morally right (9).
Problem source	Thinking that the event did not reveal the basic nature of someone or something (1) to Thinking that the event did reveal the basic nature of someone or something (9).
Self-agency	Thinking that the event was not at all caused by me (1) to Thinking that the event was very much caused by me (9).
Other-person-agency	Thinking that the event was not at all caused by someone else (1) to Thinking that the event was very much caused by someone else (9).
Circumstances-agency	Thinking that the event was not at all caused by circumstances beyond anyone's control (1) to Thinking that the event was very much caused by circumstances beyond anyone's control (9).

*Adapted from Roseman et al. (1996).

4. Most of these items were taken from Roseman et al. (1994) or Zeelenberg et al. (1998b). Participants could answer on a 9-point scale, with endpoints labelled *not at all* (1) to *very much* (9). We expected that the ORD participants would score higher on the ORD items than the other participants, and that the PRD participants would score higher on the PRD items than the other participants.

RESULTS

Participants who recalled an episode of disappointment were, according to their answers on the dichotomous question, divided in an ORD group and a PRD group. Of the 40 participants who recalled an episode of disappointment, half recalled an episode which involved ORD, the other half recalled an episode which involved PRD. Analyses were done with four conditions: ORD (*n* = 20), PRD (*n* = 20), Anger (*n* = 15), and Sadness (*n* = 15).

Appraisals

Scores on the eight appraisal scales were entered into a MANOVA, using the recalled emotion as a between-subjects factor. Intensity of the emotion recalled

was included as a covariate.³ Analysis revealed a main effect due to emotion, $F(24, 174) = 2.32, p < .001$. Table 2 depicts the mean scores on the six appraisal dimensions. The mean intensity ratings for the recalled emotions were 7.60, 8.00, 7.67, and 7.40 for outcome-related disappointment, person-related disappointment, anger, and sadness, respectively.

Outcome-related disappointment vs. person-related disappointment. First, we examined the differences in appraisals between ORD and PRD. An overall MANOVA, using the recalled type of disappointment as a between-subjects factor and intensity of the emotion recalled as a covariate revealed a significant effect of type of disappointment on appraisals, $F(8, 28) = 2.89, p < .02$. Univariate one-way ANOVAs showed that a significant difference existed for four appraisal dimensions: control potential, legitimacy, problem source, and agency (other-person-agency), $ts > 1.69, ps < .05$. Respondents indicated, as expected, that with PRD they thought to a greater extent that: they were less able to do something about the situation, they were morally right, the situation

TABLE 2
Means of each appraisal item per emotion recalled, with between-emotions contrast tests

Appraisal	Emotion recalled				Contrast	
	ORD	PRD	Anger	Sadness	t	p
Unexpectedness	7.40 ^a (+3)	6.10 ^a (−1)	6.27 ^a (−1)	6.93 ^a (−1)	1.53	.07
Motivational state	7.35 ^a (+3)	6.45 ^a (−1)	5.80 ^a (−1)	5.60 ^a (−1)	2.17	.04
Control potential*	4.40 ^a (+1)	2.05 ^a (−1)	3.53 ^a (+1)	2.13 ^a (−1)	2.15	.04
Legitimacy*	5.60 ^a (−1)	6.65 ^{a,b} (+1)	7.67 ^b (+1)	5.80 ^a (−1)	3.35	.001
Problem source*	5.50 ^a (−1)	6.60 ^a (+1)	5.67 ^a (+1)	5.53 ^a (−1)	1.12	>.10
Agency						
Self	4.30 ^a (+1)	3.50 ^a (−1)	2.40 ^a (−1)	3.87 ^a (+1)	1.79	.04
Other-person*	5.20 ^a (−1)	7.40 ^b (+1)	8.60 ^b (+1)	5.60 ^a (−1)	4.80	.001
Circumstances	5.10 ^a (+1)	4.53 ^a (−1)	2.40 ^b (−1)	5.27 ^a (+1)	2.41	.01

Notes: ORD, outcome-related disappointment; PRD, person-related disappointment. Participants could answer on a 9-point scale, higher scores indicate more appropriateness of the appraisal item. Numbers in parentheses are contrast weights. Items marked with (*) differentiate between ORD and PRD ($ts > 1.69, ps < .05$, one-tailed). Means within rows with different superscripts differ significantly ($p < .05$) by the Newman–Keuls method.

³Intensity was included as a covariate in all the analyses. This was done in order preclude the possibility that any differences on the dependent variables were due to differences in the intensity of the emotions recalled.

revealed the basic nature of someone of something, and the event was more caused by another person. ORD was appraised as more unexpected than PRD, although this difference was marginally significant ($p < .07$). The two types of disappointment did not differ on the appraisals of motivational state, self-agency and circumstances-agency ($t_s < 1.11$, n.s.).

Outcome-related disappointment, person-related disappointment, anger, and sadness. Next, we examined the appraisal patterns of ORD and PRD in the context of anger and sadness. We tested our hypotheses by using ANOVAs with the appropriate contrasts. PRD and anger were, as expected, more appraised as being caused by another person than ORD and sadness, $t = 4.80$, $p < .001$. Whereas ORD and sadness were, as expected, more appraised as caused by circumstances, $t = 2.41$, $p < .01$. PRD and anger were not more strongly associated with an appraisal of problem source than ORD and sadness, $t = 1.21$, n.s. PRD and anger were, as expected, more associated with an appraisal of legitimacy than ORD and sadness, $t = 3.35$, $p < .001$. PRD and sadness were, as expected, more associated with low control potential than ORD and anger, $t = 2.15$, $p < .04$. Finally, ORD was, as expected more associated with wanting something pleasurable ($t = 2.17$, $p < .04$) and (although marginally) more associated with unexpectedness than PRD, anger, and sadness, $t = 1.53$, $p < .07$.

In sum, when comparing the appraisal patterns of ORD and PRD we found that PRD was more strongly appraised as caused by another person, revealing the basic nature of someone, oneself being morally right, and low in control potential than ORD. Investigating the appraisal patterns of ORD and PRD in the context of anger and sadness we found that anger resembled PRD on the dimensions of legitimacy and agency. Whereas sadness resembled ORD on these dimensions. Concerning control potential PRD resembled sadness and ORD resembled anger. Unexpectedness and motivational state were most relevant for ORD.

Response types

Tables 3 (PRD items) and 4 (ORD items) depict the mean scores on the 20 response items. A MANOVA with condition (ORD vs. PRD vs. Anger vs. Sadness) as the independent variable and the response items as dependent variables and the intensity of the recalled emotion as a covariate revealed a significant difference between the four conditions, $F(60, 135) = 2.35$, $p < .001$. Univariate one-way ANOVAs showed that a significant difference existed for 13 of the 20 response items.

Outcome-related disappointment vs. person-related disappointment. First, we looked explicitly at the difference between ORD and PRD concerning the five response types. A MANOVA with condition (ORD vs. PRD) as the

TABLE 3
Means of hypothesised PRD items for each emotion recalled. With between-emotions contrasts tests

Response type and item	Emotion recalled				Contrast	
	ORD	PRD	Anger	Sadness	t	p
Feelings						
Feel distance from someone?*	5.35 ^a	7.00 ^b	7.40 ^b	4.67 ^a	1.85	.04
Feel abandoned?*	6.25 ^a	8.05 ^b	5.27 ^a	5.13 ^a	4.37	.001
Thoughts						
Think that you disapproved someone?*	4.75 ^a	6.35 ^a	7.00 ^a	4.80 ^a	1.53	.07
Think about something someone should not have done?*	4.30 ^a	7.10 ^{b,c}	8.07 ^c	5.67 ^{a,b}	1.42	.08
Action tendencies						
Feel the tendency not to be associated with someone?*	3.85 ^a	4.80 ^a	4.67 ^a	3.47 ^a	1.51	.07
Feel the tendency to get away from the situation?	5.45 ^a	6.30 ^a	5.53 ^a	4.53 ^a	1.69	.05
Actions						
Ignore someone?*	3.30 ^a	5.15 ^a	5.00 ^a	3.53 ^a	2.22	.02
Avoid someone?*	3.20 ^a	5.32 ^c	5.53 ^{b,c}	3.47 ^{a,b}	1.66	.05
Emotivational goals						
Want to be far away from someone?*	3.55 ^a	5.85 ^b	5.67 ^b	3.27 ^a	2.87	.003
Want someone to make excuses?*	3.95 ^a	6.20 ^b	7.67 ^b	3.93 ^a	1.42	.08

Note: ORD, outcome-related disappointment; PRD, person-related disappointment. Participants could answer on a 9-point scale, higher scores indicate more appropriateness of the item. Items marked with (*) differentiate between ORD and PRD ($ts > 1.71$, $ps < .05$, one-tailed). Means within rows with different superscripts differ significantly ($p < .05$) by the Newman-Keuls method.

independent variable and the response items as dependent variables and the intensity of the recalled emotion as a covariate revealed a significant multivariate difference between the two conditions, $F(20, 16) = 2.58$, $p < .03$. Univariate one-way ANOVAs showed that a significant difference existed for 13 of the 20 response items. All significant differences were in the predicted direction (i.e., PRD participants scored higher on the PRD items—see Table 3, and ORD participants scored higher on the ORD items—see Table 4). For example, results revealed that, relative to the experience of ORD, PRD involves higher levels of: (a) feeling abandoned; (b) thinking about something someone should not have done; (c) a tendency to get away from the situation; (d) avoiding someone; and (e) wanting someone to make excuses. Whereas results revealed that, relative to the experience of PRD, ORD involves higher levels of: (a)

TABLE 4
Means of hypothesised ORD items for each emotion recalled. With between-emotions contrasts tests

Response type and item	Emotion recalled				Contrast	
	ORD	PRD	Anger	Sadness	t	p
Feelings						
Feel empty inside?	7.25 ^a	6.75 ^a	3.60 ^b	6.53 ^a	3.16	.002
Feel that your hopes were dashed?*	7.45 ^b	6.10 ^b	4.27 ^a	6.27 ^{a,b}	3.22	.001
Thoughts						
Think about something you hoped for?	7.85 ^c	7.00 ^{b,c}	5.60 ^{a,b}	5.07 ^a	3.08	.002
Think about a lost opportunity?*	7.00 ^b	4.95 ^a	4.00 ^a	3.93 ^a	3.84	.001
Action tendencies						
Feel the tendency to try harder?*	5.85 ^a	4.35 ^a	4.33 ^a	5.73 ^a	1.70	.05
Feel the tendency to do something nice?	5.25 ^a	4.35 ^a	4.00 ^a	3.67 ^a	1.77	.04
Actions						
Complain	5.80 ^a	5.70 ^a	6.87 ^a	5.13 ^a	<1	>.10
Become inactive?	4.60 ^a	3.75 ^a	3.60 ^a	4.33 ^a	1.29	>.10
Emotivational goals						
Want to have a second chance?*	6.65 ^a	4.05 ^b	4.13 ^b	6.13 ^a	2.81	.004
Want to undo the event?	6.70 ^a	5.40 ^a	5.87 ^a	7.20 ^a	<1	>.10

Note: ORD, outcome-related disappointment; PRD, person-related disappointment. Participants could answer on a 9-point scale, higher scores indicate more appropriateness of the appraisal item. Items marked with (*) differentiate between ORD and PRD (*ts* > 1.70), *ps* < .05, one-tailed). Means within rows with different superscripts differ significantly (*p* < .05) by the Newman-Keuls method.

feeling that your hopes were dashed; (b) thinking about a lost opportunity; (c) a tendency to try harder; and (d) wanting to have a second chance.

Outcome-related disappointment, person-related disappointment, anger, and sadness. Next, we looked at the differences between the four recalled emotions concerning the five response types. Univariate one-way ANOVAs with appropriate contrasts (i.e. ORD contrasted against PRD, Anger, and Sadness for the ORD items; PRD contrasted against ORD, Anger, and Sadness for the PRD items) showed that a significant difference existed for 13 of the 20 response items. All of these were again in the predicted direction.

In sum, when comparing the response profiles of ORD and PRD we found clear differences on all five response types. Investigating the response types of ORD and PRD in the context of anger and sadness revealed that both ORD and PRD can be differentiated from anger and sadness on the basis of feelings, thoughts, action tendencies, actions, and emotivational goals.

DISCUSSION

In the present article we have argued that the emotion word disappointment refers to two different experiences, namely, outcome-related disappointment (ORD) and person-related disappointment (PRD). Results of our study showed that these two types of disappointment differ in both appraisal patterns and response types. Moreover, results showed that outcome-related disappointment and person-related disappointment not only differ from each other but also differ in both appraisal patterns and response types from the related negative emotions of sadness and anger.

Outcome-related disappointment (ORD) is experienced when one wanted a pleasurable outcome, but this outcome is (unexpectedly) not obtained. The situation is perceived as one in which (relatively) little that can be done about it. People who experience ORD feel empty inside and feel that their hopes were dashed. They think about something they hoped for and about a lost opportunity. Furthermore, they have the tendency to try harder and the tendency to do something nice. Finally, people who experience ORD want to have a second chance.

Person-related disappointment (PRD) is experienced in situations when one attributes the cause of the undesirable situation to another person. The situation is perceived as one in which little can be done about it and as revealing the basic nature of someone, whereas oneself is perceived as being morally right. People who experience PRD feel distance from the other person and feel abandoned. They disapprove of the other person and think that this person did something he/she should not have done. Furthermore, they have the tendency to get away from the situation, to ignore and to avoid the other person. People who experience PRD want to be far away from the person.

Looking at the appraisal patterns and response types of ORD and PRD in relation to those of anger and sadness, one may conclude that ORD and PRD are different emotional experiences than sadness and anger. Interestingly, however, the results also show some correspondence between these two types of disappointment and sadness and anger. ORD resembles sadness more than anger, whereas PRD resembles anger more than sadness. One resemblance between ORD and sadness and between PRD and anger may stem from the sources of the emotions. For example, Ortony et al. (1988) make a distinction between event-based emotions and agent-based emotions. In our view both ORD and sadness can be seen as event-based or outcome-related emotions. Whereas both PRD and anger can be seen as agent-based or other-person-related emotions.

In the remainder of this discussion we will first address some possible limitations of methodology we used for comparing ORD to PRD. Next, we elaborate on the theoretical implications of our results. Finally, we attend to the purpose and utility of disentangling these two disappointment experiences.

Methodological issues

The present study addressed the issue of distinguishing ORD from PRD by using a retrospective approach. This approach may be subject to some limitations. One could argue that respondents may be relatively self-conscious while filling out the questionnaire. Furthermore, one could argue that recalled emotions may suffer from memory distortion. Both arguments could pose a threat for the validity and generalisability of our results. On the other hand, the present approach has several important advantages. One being that with the use of recalled real-life emotional experiences one taps on important, intense, and realistic emotions. Future research could address the question whether ORD and PRD also yield differences in appraisal patterns and response types beyond the retrospective approach (e.g., in on-line emotional reactions).

A second methodological consideration concerns the argument that self-selection can be a threat to the validity of our present findings. It could be possible that pre-existing individual differences are responsible for the obtained differences in appraisal patterns and response types. For example, people who are more concerned with the interpersonal realm could label disappointments more readily as “person-related” and see other people as the cause of disappointment. Whereas people who are more achievement-oriented could label disappointments more readily as “outcome-related” and see circumstances as the cause of disappointment. In an earlier study concerning the appraisal patterns of ORD and PRD (van Dijk et al., 1998) participants were randomly assigned to conditions in which they had to recall either an episode of ORD or an episode of PRD. This study yielded results comparable to those of the present study with respect to differences between the appraisals associated with ORD and PRD. This makes the possible threat to the validity of the present findings less compelling.

A third and final methodological consideration concerns the question frame in the present study for measuring response types in ORD and PRD experiences. The measurement of appraisals was conducted by asking participants to rate how much each target emotion was caused by each appraisal, whereas the measurement of response types was conducted by asking participants what their responses were when they felt the emotion. That is, with the latter participants were only given a time focus and were not explicitly asked what responses were caused by the emotion.⁴ The possibility exists that participants mention responses that are not only part of the target emotion (our objective), but also responses that are part of other emotions occurring at the same time or even nonemotional responses which correlate with the target emotion or with its situational elicitors. A second point related to the measurement of response types concerns the specific items we used to tap the responses of PRD. In several

⁴We thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

of our (PRD-) items we used the word “someone”. One might argue that the use of the word “someone” is seen as more appropriate to PRD than ORD, because PRD is mainly felt toward persons, whereas ORD is mainly felt toward outcomes. Perhaps if we had used the word “something” instead of or in addition to “someone” we would have yielded somewhat different results. We cannot exclude both these possibilities in the present research and it is important in future research to take these considerations into account. That is, the use of the same unambiguous question frame in the measurement of response types as we used with the measurement of appraisals and to include in specific response items both the terms “someone” and “something”.

Theoretical issues

A central theoretical issue underlying the present research is whether ORD and PRD can be considered as different emotions? Do our results indicate that ORD and PRD are different distinct emotions, as for example, anger and sadness are? Or did we merely show that ORD and PRD are variants of the some core emotion (disappointment), just as “hot” and “cold” anger can be viewed as different types of anger (Scherer, 1988), or as “freezing” and “fleeing” fear might be considered as different types of fear? What criteria should be used to determine that ORD and PRD (or other variants of a given emotion) are distinct enough to merit separate description and consideration? The answer to this question is partly dependent on one’s definition of emotions, for example, whether one views emotions as dimensional or discrete states. Viewing emotions as discrete states (e.g., Roseman’s 1996 model) one would have to find particular combinations of categorical appraisal outcomes for both ORD and PRD to adhere the claim that ORD and PRD are indeed different discrete emotions. In this perspective, one could argue that our research provides relative little support for the claim that ORD and PRD are different discrete emotions. However, viewing emotions as dimensional states, the present results do indicate that ORD and PRD can be considered as different emotions. In a dimensional model (e.g., Scherer’s 1984 model) appraisal variables are conceptualised as dimensions along which appraisal outcomes can vary continuously and in which there are an infinite number of different emotions which corresponds to a particular pattern of outcomes along the appraisal dimensions. In adopting this perspective we could conclude that ORD and PRD are indeed different emotions.

Apart from different appraisal patterns, another important criterion for differentiation of emotions would be differences in response types. In the present research we found differences between ORD and PRD across multiple response types adding support to the view that these two types of disappointment are different emotions. However, we also found considerable similarities between ORD and PRD in (appraisals and) response types suggesting that ORD and PRD are also quite similar. These similarities between ORD and PRD could be the

result of the possibility that ORD and PRD are assembled out of partially overlapping sets of elements. The nature of these overlapping sets of elements depends on the details of how the situation is appraised by the person and how he/she attempts to cope with it (Ortony and Turner, 1990). One might even argue that PRD is usually preceded by ORD, whereas ORD is not necessarily followed by PRD.⁵ Perhaps the most salient initial experience with disappointment is that some event transpires and this could constrain the emotional reaction to ORD. At the same time, however, one may seek to understand the causal origins of the event, so that PRD becomes a possibility. PRD therefore could involve reactions to both the event and the agent simultaneously, hence the partly overlap between the appraisals and response types of ORD and PRD (see Ortony et al., 1988, for a comparable view on event-based and agent-based emotions). Future research could investigate this issue of overlapping and distinct appraisals and response types of ORD and PRD (or other variants of a given emotion). Related to this issue may be the point made by Ellsworth and Smith (1988) that some appraisals may be central for eliciting an emotion, while others are only typically associated with an emotion. One important question then is which appraisals and response types are central to ORD and PRD, that is, which appraisals and response types are core attributes of ORD and PRD and which are merely a common correlate of them. Results that would show that ORD and PRD differ in their central appraisals and response types would strengthened our view that ORD and PRD are indeed different emotions.

In sum, in our view ORD and PRD are at least different emotional experiences. Dependent on the criteria one sets for differentiation between distinct emotions, these two types of disappointment can be viewed as two different emotions or as two variants of the same core emotion.

Differentiating disappointments: What is the use of it?

This leaves us with the question as to whether it is useful to distinguish between ORD and PRD. Don't we run the risk of ending these kind of research enterprises by identifying an infinite number of emotions each relevant for an infinite number of specific situations? Doesn't this bring us back to the issue of emotional typologies? An issue that clearly was not high on William James' (1890/1952, p. 742) agenda:

⁵ Although it might be inadequate to say that during an emotion episode one emotion succeeds another. This could lead to the problem of determining when one emotion ends and the next one begins. Instead, the component processes of appraisals, of activation of action readiness mechanisms, of activation-specific behaviours, and of physiological responses wax and wane, either successively or, in the event, at overlapping periods of simultaneously (Frijda, 1994).

The result of all this flux is that the merely descriptive literature of the emotions is one of the most tedious parts of psychology. And not only is it tedious, but you feel that its subdivisions are to a great extent either fictitious or unimportant, and that its pretences to accuracy are a sham. But unfortunately there is little psychological writing about emotions which is not merely descriptive. [...] But as far as 'scientific psychology' of the emotions goes, I may have surfeited by too much reading of classic works on the subject, but I should as lief read verbal descriptions of the shapes of the rocks on a New Hampshire farm as toil through them again.

In our view, it is useful to distinguish between ORD and PRD. Our results concerning response types go beyond the descriptive level and touches on the core of emotions (i.e., the readiness to act and the prompting of plans). Our results showed that ORD and PRD have important behavioural and motivational differences. For example, ORD is characterised by a tendency to try harder and wanting a second chance, whereas PRD is characterised by a tendency to dissociate from (or ignore or avoid) someone and wanting to be far away from someone. Thus, ORD and PRD do different things with people. They do not only do different things with people, but they are also experienced in different contexts. That is, ORD may be a more individualistic emotion (or an emotion experienced in a more individualistic context), whereas PRD may be a more social emotion (or an emotion experienced in a more social context). In our view, one important criterion for the usefulness of distinguishing between ORD and PRD is whether it helps to explain and predict the differential behaviours that are part of these two types of disappointment. Elsewhere, we have argued that there is a need to be specific about the emotion under investigation when researching the influence of emotions on behaviour, as even closely related emotions may have distinctive effects on behaviour. (Zeelenberg, van Dijk, Manstead, & van der Pligt, 2000). In that article we reviewed research studies aimed at disentangling regret and disappointment. Our present research clearly shows the need for specificity already on the level of disappointment. Moreover, the present research shows that it is important to distinguish aspects of emotions that go unmarked in everyday language. Although we use in our everyday language the same term, "disappointment", for both ORD and PRD, the present research has demonstrated that there are at least two distinct variants of disappointment that should be attended to in the literature. The finding that our respondents recalled half of the time an episode of ORD and in the other half an episode of PRD suggests that a substantial part of the disappointments experienced by people are PRDs. This is important because disappointment is not an uncommon or trivial experience, but, as mentioned earlier, the third most frequently experienced negative emotion (Schimmack & Diener, 1997). Whereas previous existing literature conceptualises disappointment largely in terms of ORD, our results suggests that this conceptualisation of disappointment need to be revised or further differentiated. We admit that based on the presented data we are unable to definitively conclude whether ORD and PRD are indeed two

distinct emotions, such as anger and sadness are, or two variants of the same emotion. Nonetheless, the present findings do suggest that with the conceptualisation of disappointment largely in terms of ORD, we are missing half of the story about what disappointment really means.⁶ In this way we have, at least partly, answered the question of what we talk about when we talk about disappointment.

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⁶ It should be noted that the finding that half of the disappointment episodes involved ORD and half involved PRD does not necessarily mean that they occur at the same frequency for people. It could also mean that half of the time people interpret the word “disappointment” in the outcome-related sense and the other half in the person-related sense. We thank W. Gerrod Parrott for pointing this out.

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